

DMR/ASD Updates

Commissioner Morrissey's Quarterly Quote:



July is here and we are all eagerly anticipating the launch of the new Autism Spectrum Division. As we prepare to "open" the doors to children on the autism spectrum we know that their families, legislators, and the general public are all interested in what services and programs will be available.

At the Department of Mental Retardation, we feel strongly that open communication with families, providers, and staff will play an important role in the roll-out and success of this new Division. Therefore, we welcome you to the first edition of **DMR/ASD Updates**, our new quarterly newsletter. Our goal is to keep families and others who are interested in the Autism Spectrum Division up-to-date as we move forward.

The **DMR/ASD Updates** will report on new programs, services, and supports. It will also provide an ongoing timeline to chronicle the infrastructure developments in the year ahead. The Division will grow and build incrementally and these changes and additions will be highlighted in each issue. I hope it will be a valuable tool for all members of the autism community.

I also wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Secretary Preston, of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, for having the insight to initiate this Division, and Governor Romney for his support in addressing this issue of critical concern. Many families and legislators have worked hard to get this new Autism Spectrum Division off the ground and I wish to extend my gratitude to them and look forward to our continued commitment on behalf of these children.

Status of the New Autism Division:

Summer of 2005



Budget Process-FY '06:

The state budget cycle runs from July to June. We are pleased to announce that the budget process for FY '06 has come to a close and \$1.2 Million has been appropriated to the Autism Spectrum Division.

New Intake & Eligibility Process:

All children with a Pervasive Developmental Disorder who have not accessed services through the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) in the past and are interested in services with the new Autism Spectrum Division will go through an Intake & Eligibility Process specific to autism spectrum disorders.

This will also include those children with high functioning autism and Asperger's who went through the existing DMR process for Children's Services but were found ineligible.

As of August 15th, the Autism Spectrum Division will begin an initial intake process. This process will help families gather the necessary documentation related to the autism diagnosis.

The Regional Intake & Eligibility (I & E) teams will not be diagnosing autism spectrum disorders, instead, they will accept a diagnosis from autism trained clinicians including: developmental pediatricians, neurologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists.

After August 15th, families may contact their local Autism Center or Area DMR Office for an application and a check-list of the necessary diagnostic verification information.

The family will be contacted after this information is received by DMR's Regional Intake & Eligibility Teams.

Children Currently Receiving DMR Services:

Children with autism spectrum disorders who have already been found eligible by DMR's Regional I & E Teams will remain eligible for services and supports.

At the outset of the Autism Spectrum Division, these children will remain connected to their Area Office and the provider they are currently working with and will not move to the new Division during FY '06.

Based on the appropriation level the Division anticipates expending the money in the following manner in FY '06:

- Develop and enhance provider supports and staff capacity at the Autism Centers across the state.
- Publish a state-wide Autism Resource Guide available both in print and on-line.
- Create a state-wide program for First Responder Training.
- Develop a Pediatrician Awareness Program.
- Establish new social skills programs and vacation camps for children with autism spectrum disorders.
- Provide consistent communication with families and stakeholders through the **DMR/ASD Updates**.

DMR/ASD Updates

Status of the New Autism Division: (Continued)

First Quarter Activities & Program Initiatives:

- The state-wide Autism Resource Guide will be published.
- Additional staff will be hired for the Autism Centers.
- A state-wide training model for First Responders will be adopted.
- Using elements of the CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." Campaign, the Division will explore the creation of a Pediatrician Awareness Program for early recognition of developmental disabilities, particularly autism.



'I have a 5½ year old brother my brother is autistic. It is like he is trapped in the past. And we are the future and a door is in the present. And the more we teach him the closer he gets to finding the key. And if he learns enough he will find the key! So we teach him as much as we possible can. And if he doesn't find the key I'll love him just as much but I hope he'll find the key.'

Written by:

Joey at age eight

State Funded Autism Support Centers

Please contact any of these Autism Centers to begin the Intake & Eligibility Process

Autism Alliance of MetroWest

Serving: MetroWest

14 East Central Street, Natick,
Phone: 508-652-9900

Website: <http://www.autismalliance.org>

Autism Resource Center

Serving: Central Massachusetts

360 West Boylston St., West Boylston
Phone: 508-595-9101

Website: www.communitygateway.org/local/autism.htm

The Autism Support Center

Serving: Northeast

6 Southside Road, Danvers
Phone: 978-777-9135

Website: www2.shore.net/~nsarc/Home.htm

Boston Families for Autism

Serving: Boston

Hyde Park, MA 02136
Phone: 617-327-9486

No Website

Community Autism Resources

Serving: Southeast

1577 North Main St., Fall River
Phone: 508-677-9239

Website: www.community-autism-resources.org

Community Resources for People with Autism

Serving: Western Massachusetts

116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton
Phone: 413-529-2428

Website: www.theassn.org/crautismindex.htm

The Family Autism Center

Serving: Norfolk County/South West

789 Clapboardtree Street, Westwood
Phone: 781-762-4001 x 329

Website: <http://www.sncarc.org/autism.html>

TILL: Autism Support Center

Serving: Greater Boston

20 Eastbrook Rd, Dedham
Phone: 781-302-4600

Website: www.tillinc.org/index.htm

Asperger's Specific:

AANE*

(Asperger's Association of New England)

182 Main Street
Watertown

Phone: 617-393-3824

Website: <http://aane.autistics.org>

* As of this printing AANE receives no DMR Funds



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